

**Imperial College Union**

**NUS CONFERENCE REPORT**

*A note by the President*

**Introduction**

Nine students of Imperial College gave up 3 days that they will never see again to represent the views of this Union at NUS Conference in Blackpool. The purpose of this report is to provide you with a brief overview of how we got on and to give you a flavour of the sort of things that go on at this bizarre meeting.

**Our delegation**

Eight delegates were elected by cross campus ballot along with the 2008/09 Sabbatical Officers to attend conference. I attended as ex-officio delegation leader as per the NUS and ICU constitutions. 2 of the delegates elected were unable to attend due to a change in circumstances. One of these was replaced by Jess Marley and this substitution was reported to the last Council. Another replacement had to be found around 18 hours before the registration deadline closed so after a lot of scrambling around Alex Grisman kindly agreed to join our delegation. This meant that we did not have any vacancies and thus our final delegation was

- Stephen Brown
- Ashley Brown
- Kirsty Patterson
- Alex Grisman
- Jess Marley
- Liz Hyde
- Jen Morgan
- Victoria Gibbs
- Camilla Royle

**Conduct of delegates**

Eight delegates were flawless and they are to be congratulated on attending a meeting which ran on to 11pm at night. 1 delegate however disobeyed the Union Constitution and the democratically decided will of Union Council by voting against the NUS governance reforms on behalf of Student Respect, a hard left political grouping active within NUS and will now be subject to a disciplinary motion at the next meeting of Council.

**Conference debates**

The feedback I have had so far from delegates is that conference was by and large a complete waste of time. Some positive policy was passed but to what extent this will then influence the work of the NUS is still not clear. A document containing the resolutions of NUS Conference is available on their website and a full commentary is available online at [live.cgcu.net](http://live.cgcu.net) so in this summary I will only cover the important issues.

**Day 1 – New constitution not passed**

The centrepiece of Annual Conference was supposed to be the ratification of the new constitution which is the NUS's last hope of becoming a representative body that is actually taken seriously by people in the HE sector and the government. Unfortunately the hard left managed to scaremonger and scrape together a wrecking 1/3<sup>rd</sup> majority and the ratification fell. The consequences of this I will deal with in a later paragraph.

**Day 2 – A tale full of sound and fury, signifying nothing**

Day 2 mainly consisted of elections and policy debates. The current VP HE Wes Streeting was duly elected National President by a comfortable margin and 2 moderate candidates won the positions of National Treasurer and National Secretary. The debate on Higher Education funding was disappointing as in our delegations view the NUS still lacks a credible higher education funding policy heading in to the 2009 review. The text eventually passed by conference does acknowledge that free education is not on the table but the new policy is only marginally better than the "fund education not war" arguments put forward by the more radical sections of the National Union. In particular, Conference voted to support a National Bursary scheme which would in Council's view would be very detrimental to the students of Imperial College.

### **Day 3 – NUS does Model United Nations**

On day 3 even after making allowances for the fact that most of the delegates were very tired I did not fail to be astounded by the stupidity of some of the arguments put forward by the NUS leadership. A positive motion calling upon the NUS to give greater support to medical students was passed but only after one of their Executive Members removed the part that would have ensured that the NUS's representative to the BMA was actually a medical student. He argued that insisting upon this was somehow offensive to LGBT, Black, Disabled and Female students. To add insult to injury, our delegates were then treated to the ridiculous spectacle of the meeting spending a lot of time debating foreign affairs in the Society and Citizenship zone during which the National President berated a delegate from Ulster as she is of the view that white men are not allowed an opinion on matters of global security. Nothing discussed in this zone had any relevance what so ever to Imperial students in their capacity as students so we joined several other delegates in voting against the majority of motions in this zone.

### **Full Election Results**

- National President Wes Streeting (Labour Students)
- Vice President (Higher Education) Aaron Porter (Organised Independents)
- Vice President (Further Education) Beth Walker
- National Secretary Richard "Bubble" Budden
- National Treasurer Dave Lewis
- Vice President (Welfare) Ama Uzowuru (Organised Independents)
- Block of 12 (Part time Exec)
  - Tom Stubbs (Liberal Democrat)
  - Rob Owen (Student Respect)
  - Joel Braunold (Union of Jewish Students)
  - Hind Hassan (Student Respect)
  - Yemi Makinde
  - Ed Marsh (Labour Students)
  - Susan Nash (Labour Students)
  - Sam Rozati (Conservative)
  - Elizabeth Somerville (Organised Independent)
  - Nasir Tarmann (FOSIS)
  - Ben Whittaker (Organised Independents)
  - Hollie Williams (Labour Students)

### **The future**

I would like to refer you to the policy that we passed when calling for an Extraordinary Conference back in the Autumn to discuss the reforms which failed at Annual Conference. The following text is now policy of this Union

#### ***Imperial College Union further believes***

- 1. That if this attempt at NUS reform fails then it is a waste of our financial resources and Sabbaticals time engaging with an organisation that refuses to change due to the vested interests and wrecking tactics of the hard left.*

#### ***Imperial College Union further resolves***

- 1. Should the governance reforms fail to be passed by both Extraordinary Conference this term and Annual Conference in Spring, with particular interest in the establishment of an NUS Board with absolute financial and legal responsibility for all of NUS's activities, then Imperial College Union should reconsider whether or not we wish to remain NUS affiliates.*

Your views on this would be much appreciated as last week all Conference delegates received an email informing us that there should be no attempts to have any further meetings to ratify these proposals this year. This was despite protestations from several Unions (ICU included) that waiting another year to have another mind-numbing debate on the internal structures of the NUS was not an option.